

E-MAIL

Changing the 'average' opinion

By Tim Brown

IN THE days of spam-riddled inboxes, everyone has an opinion on how to raise the average conversion, the average sale, average open rate or the average click-through rate. Years of data from some of the best, and worst, companies who specialize in online marketing have been analyzed and published to help construct best practices for e-mail marketers. For that, I say, "Congratulations. You're on course to bring e-mail marketing, a gateway of infinite marketing possibilities and unlimited return-on-investment potential, to an average level.

E-mail marketing is a channel, a unique marketing avenue unlike any other, for you to showcase your product or service to the world. Whether your company is business-to-business or business-to-consumer, it can help propel you to levels unattainable 10 years ago. But how do you get there? What do you do to get your e-mail to stand out? What type of campaign is going to impact your customer, giving him or her no other choice but to click on your e-mail and purchase your product?

The answers we've seen include "segment your e-mail lists" or "A/B test your e-mail designs" and even "make sure your offer lies above the fold." These are all very good answers, and key ways in helping create a successful e-mail campaign. But something is missing. Something that will ultimately make the difference between maximizing your profit or resulting in another average e-mail.

That something is creativity. It seems simple really. After all, marketing is creativity. Without creativity, we'd never know about the caveman's struggle to adapt to human society or about a duck that can provide supplemental insurance. It's your and your company's belief that your product is better than any other in your market. Why would you settle for "average" results? It's so easy to fall back on your averages to gauge whether or not a particular campaign is successful, but how creative was it? How was it different than any other e-mail you've sent in the past? Were your customers so enthralled that they felt inclined to forward it to their peers so that they can see what you had to offer?

I ask you, the e-mail marketing guru, to come up with a different type of strategy. Break free from the standard e-mail you send week in and week out, and come up with

something unique. You know your product and market better than anyone, so these are merely suggestions.

Promote online shopping security. If your e-mail is product heavy, create an e-mail promoting your "shopping cart safety" or "customer purchasing experience" and how you take care of your customer throughout the entire process.



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Create buzz. If you only offer 10 percent or free shipping with every e-mail, offer a special time-restricted sale off large margin or clearance products to create buzz throughout your contact list.

Increase repeat customers. If your goal is to increase repeat customers, offer an additional 10 percent off a customer's second order.

Obtain new customers. If you provide a service, maybe an search engine optimization or hosting service, offer three months' free hosting and optimization for referring another company.

Promote corporate responsibility. Some marketers, especially retailers, send an inbox-cluttering 10 e-mails or more a week. To show their company is focused on today's issues, they could offer a special two-week promotion where 10 percent of every order is donated to the charity of their choice.

These types of offers may help your e-mail stand out from the many others that are sent every day, and can help increase brand awareness. They're elementary in their premise, but they give your customer a reason to click.

An offer is only as good as the company that provides it. Offering the same promotion week in and week out is an easy way to ruin your e-mail marketing efforts. Include creativity with every campaign. Be the first in your market to provide something different each time you send an e-mail. Create a campaign that incites a purchasing frenzy, instead of an average experience. ■

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